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SUBJECT: RTG MAINTAINS CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY

¶11. Summary: Guinea's national television and radio service, RTG, has continued to provide fair, even handed coverage of Embassy events, including DVCs, since the coup by the CNDD. The Embassy has held numerous events, including a DVC press conference by the Acting Assistant Secretary, and RTG television and radio has covered them all. RTG also invited the PAO to do a 30-minute interview on the Obama inauguration. This continued openness to the Embassy by the state-controlled media is an indication that the CNDD does not firmly control the content of its own broadcaster, and may reflect the influence of the Minister of Information and Culture Justin Morel Junior. End summary.

¶12. Since the coup of December 23, 2008, RTG has provided extensive coverage of the activities of the CNDD, and has been a platform for Captain Dadis Camara to make speeches and issue decrees. However, both radio and television have maintained cordial relations with the U.S. Embassy and have continued to provide even-handed coverage of Embassy activities even in cases where U.S. officials have explicitly condemned the coup and called for a return to civilian rule.

¶13. On January 28 the Embassy hosted a press conference via digital video conference (DVC) with the acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Phillip Carter. During this DVC Carter made strong statements that the military should return power to civilian authorities and set a date for both legislative and presidential elections this year. The DVC was covered by RTG radio and television and the Minister of Information and Culture Justin Morel Junior was in attendance. Both RTG radio and television aired reports of the DVC, including the statements on elections by the Assistant Secretary and a sound bite from the PAO.

¶14. On February 4, the political counselor gave a speech at NDI that was also covered by RTG. During the event, a government minister refused to acknowledge the political counselor or to acknowledge that USAID had funded the project. However, RTG's coverage included an excerpt from the POL officer's speech and also noted that USAID was a co-sponsor of the event. In addition, RTG has covered other Embassy DVCs, including one on the new Obama administration. They invited the PAO to do a 30-minute interview on the inauguration of Barack Obama.

¶15. PAO met with RTG journalists, who reported that there were no repercussions for their reporting of the U.S. position on the coup. However, they complain of interference from the CNDD and heavy handed tactics. The journalists say the CNDD pressures them to broadcast their meetings in their entirety without editing. They noted that the military officer in charge of the press office at the Presidency, a holdover from the Conte regime, has become increasingly difficult to work with since the coup. The journalists noted that the new Minister, Justin Morel Junior, has not intervened a great deal in the day to day affairs of RTG, unless it is to improve professionalism among the journalists and technicians.

¶16. Comment: The fact that Dadis Camara has not interfered with RTG to the point of excluding the views of the United States may be a sign that he wants to maintain good relations with the U.S. and a modicum of openness in the media. It is also possible that he does not grasp the power of the media and its usefulness as a tool to control the message of the CNDD. RTG's continuing openness to the views of the U.S. may also reflect the influence of Justin Morel Junior. He is undoubtedly the most popular member of the CNDD

cabinet, especially among young people. He is also a former International Visitor participant with positive views of the U.S. The Embassy will continue to capitalize on this openness by using RTG, the only national radio and television network, to get our message out about the need for elections in 2009 and a restoration of civilian government.

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